

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended): A surgical sponge comprising:
 - a) three substantially spherical radiopaque markers;
 - b) said markers being closely grouped and proximate to one another;
 - c) each of said markers having an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 ; and
 - d) said radiopaque markers being disposed in a relationship that is substantially fixed both in spacing and in orientation, whereby said markers produce an x-ray image having a distinctive, visually recognizable shape.
2. (previously presented): A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein each of said markers has an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 for x-rays incident on said target in any direction.
3. (original): A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein said x-ray density is equivalent to at least about 0.2 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 .
4. (original): A surgical sponge as recited by claim 2, wherein said x-ray density is equivalent to at least about 0.2 g/cm^2 of BaSO_4 .
5. (previously presented): A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein each of said markers has an area of at least 5 mm^2 in at least one projection.

6. (previously presented): A surgical sponge as recited by claim 5, wherein each of said markers has an area of at least 5 mm² in any projection.
7. (canceled)
8. (canceled)
9. (canceled)
10. (canceled)
11. (original): A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, further comprising a remotely detectable electronic article surveillance tag.
12. (canceled)
13. (currently amended): A method of detecting a surgical sponge within a surgical patient, said surgical sponge comprising three substantially spherical radiopaque markers, said markers being closely grouped and proximate to one another, each of said markers having an x-ray density equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm² of BaSO₄, said radiopaque markers being disposed in a relationship that is substantially fixed both in spacing and in orientation, whereby said markers produce an x-ray image having a distinctive, visually recognizable shape, and said method comprising the steps of: (a) obtaining at least one x-ray of at least a portion of said patient likely to contain said radiopaque markers; and (b) examining said x-ray to detect and locate an image of said sponge.
14. (currently amended): A method of detecting a surgical sponge within a surgical patient and treating said surgical patient, said surgical sponge comprising three substantially spherical radiopaque markers, said markers being closely grouped and proximate to one another, each of said markers having an x-ray density

equivalent to at least about 0.1 g/cm² of BaSO₄, said radiopaque markers being disposed in a relationship that is substantially fixed both in spacing and in orientation, whereby said markers produce an x-ray image having a distinctive, visually recognizable shape, and said method comprising the steps of: (a) obtaining at least one x-ray of at least a portion of said patient likely to contain said radiopaque markers; (b) examining said x-ray to detect and locate an image of said sponge; and (c) carrying out a surgical procedure to remove said sponge from said patient.

15. (canceled)
16. (canceled)
17. (previously presented): A surgical sponge as recited by claim 1, wherein said three substantially spherical radiopaque markers are contiguous.
18. (previously presented): A method of detecting a surgical sponge within a surgical patient as recited by claim 13, wherein said three substantially spherical radiopaque markers are contiguous.
19. (previously presented): A method of detecting a surgical sponge within a surgical patient and treating said surgical patient as recited by claim 14, wherein said three substantially spherical radiopaque markers are contiguous.